

Guide to Conducting Research in Wilderness Areas & Nature Reserves

June, 2003

This document provides information for researchers on conducting scientific research in Nova Scotia's protected wilderness areas and nature reserves. The document provides some general background information, and outlines the application process for a scientific research licence.



Background

An important objective of Wilderness Areas and Nature Reserves in Nova Scotia is to provide opportunities for scientific research.



Wilderness Areas provide important benchmark ecosystems relatively undisturbed by humans. They were established, in part, to represent the diversity of landscapes and ecosystems found in Nova Scotia. Consequently, Wilderness Areas protect a wide array of ecosystems across the province including old growth forests, a variety of wetlands, barrens and other significant natural areas.

Nature reserves are generally smaller than Wilderness Areas, and protect specific rare or special species, habitats or ecosystems.

The Protected Areas Branch of the NS Department of Environment and Labour (DEL) administers research activities in Wilderness Areas and Nature Reserves. The Branch recognizes the importance of scientific research in protected areas and encourages research activities.

Wilderness Areas

Wilderness Areas are significant

natural areas, designated under Nova Scotia's *Wilderness Areas Protection Act*.

The existing areas were designated in 1998, following an extensive, province-wide, planning and consultation process.

Approximately 5% of the province is protected in designated Wilderness Areas.

Wilderness Areas protect examples of different landscapes, and outstanding natural features, while providing opportunities for enjoying wilderness recreation, sportfishing, and traditional patterns of hunting and trapping.

Nature Reserves

Nature Reserve are natural spaces legally protected under the *Special Places Protection Act*. Areas are designated to safeguard the species, ecosystems, and other natural features which occur there, while providing opportunities for scientific research, education, and nature appreciation.

Legislation

Section 21 of the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act* and Sections 8 and 16 of the *Special Places Protection Act* address scientific research in Wilderness Areas and Nature



Reserves.

These sections allow for the issuing of licenses to conduct scientific research, including activities which normally would be prohibited in the protected areas. Such activities may include specimen collection, animal capture for banding or radio collaring, vegetation sampling, digging, habitat manipulation, and vehicle use.

Application Process

The purpose of the application process is to ensure that research activities are appropriate for the protected area, and provide for project monitoring and follow-up by Protected Areas staff.



The application process is as follows:

Step 1 - Application

Application forms or proposals are received by the Protected Areas Ecologist (application forms can be obtained from the Protected Areas Ecologist).

Submissions must describe:

1. research objectives;
2. research methodologies;
3. potential environmental impacts;



4. duration of research activities; and
5. specific research locations.

Additional information may be requested for some projects.

Step 2 - Review & Consultation

A copy of the completed application is sent to the appropriate Regional Protected Areas Area Coordinator for review. Where appropriate, other scientists, Department staff, staff from other government departments and public interest groups may be informed of the proposed research and given opportunity to provide comment.

Step 3 - Evaluation

The proposed research project is evaluated on:

1. potential environmental impact;
2. scientific merit;
3. whether it meets regulatory requirements;
4. potential conflict with other stakeholders or communities; and
5. consistency with existing management plans.

Recommendations may be suggested for alternative methodology, timing or location, if warranted to reduce potential impacts. Normally the ecologist would only provide these suggestions after thorough discussion with the research applicant.

Step 4 - Processing

A recommendation regarding approval of the application is made by the Protected Areas

Ecologist and forwarded to the Minister or signing authority.

Step 5 - Issuance

The application process can sometimes be done quite rapidly, however, applicants should allow up to 30 days before a decision on approval is made. If additional information is required to complete the application additional time may be required.

The license is issued with terms and conditions attached. General terms and conditions for most licences include providing copies of data, reports and publications produced as a result of the research and annual reports for multi-year projects. The Protected Areas Branch usually agrees not to publish data collected by other researchers without permission. Specific conditions may also be attached to the license and the license is usually issued for a specified time period.

Researchers must also adhere to all other legislative provisions and government directives (e.g. travel ban due to high fire hazard), while conducting their research.

Contact Information

If you have questions regarding this process contact the Protected Areas Ecologist:

Ecologist
Protected Areas Branch
N.S. Department of Environment
and Labour
P.O. Box 697, Halifax, N.S.
B3J 2T8
Tel; 902-424-2176



DEL - Protected Areas Branch
Western Regional Office
60 Logan Road, Bridgewater,
NS, B4V 3J8
Tel; 543-4685

Central Regional Office
5151 Terminal Road, Halifax,
NS, B3J 2T8
Tel; 424-2117
www.gov.ns.ca/enla/pareas/protectedareas@gov.ns.ca

Eastern Regional Office
295 Charlotte Street, Sydney,
NS, B1P 6H7
Tel; 563-2100

For general information on Nova Scotia's Protected Areas, visit your regional DEL or local DNR office, and pick up a copy of the following publications;

Keep It Wild - a guide for low impact recreation in Nova Scotia's Wilderness Areas

Protecting Wilderness - a summary of Nova Scotia's Wilderness Areas Protection Act

Nature Reserves of Nova Scotia

Wilderness Areas are mapped in the Fifth Edition of *The Nova Scotia Atlas* (2001) - available at bookstores.

Keep It Wild 
Nova Scotia's Protected Areas

